



Meeting Minutes

Meeting	Trustee Board	
	Management Board	
	Executive Committee	
	Finance & Commercial Development	
	Appointments & Remuneration	
	Compliance, Governance & Risk	
	Other: Annual All-Student Meeting (AASM)	

Meeting Date	05 November 2025
Meeting Time	13:00-14:00
Attendance	
Present	<p>Holly Pearce (Students' Association Vice President Education), Chair Xander McDade (Students' Association President), Motion Proposer 12 student members were in attendance Paul Stalker (Insight and Democracy Coordinator), Technical Support Hannah Laycock (Operations and Governance Coordinator), minute taker</p>

Section	Minutes
1. Welcome and Meeting Management	
1.1 Welcome	The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the motion.
1.2 HISA should hold a referendum on whether to leave NUS UK and NUS Charity	<p>The Chair asked the proposer, Xander McDade, to present their argument as to why attendees should vote on the motion.</p> <p>Proposer, Xander McDade, summarised the reasons for the proposed motion, <i>HISA should hold a referendum on whether to leave NUS UK and NUS Charity</i> as follows.</p> <p>Argument FOR the motion The Higher Education (HE) sector is experiencing significant financial challenges, and UHI University and Colleges are no exception to this. Most Students' Associations receive most of their funding from the university. HISA receives a Block Grant from UHI, which has been frozen for the last three years, and it has been indicated this will continue up until 2027.</p> <p>There are several contributing factors, such as the cost-of-living crisis, the Ukraine war, which have caused the general inflation rate to increase, and therefore causing acute pressure on all organisations, including HISA.</p> <p>Due to this there have been significant efforts to reduce costs at HISA without any loss of staff or where people may have left the organisation naturally,</p>

there position may not have been replaced. Officer hours had also been reduced two years ago. However, more significant savings were needed. One being to consider HISA's membership of National Union of Students (NUS) UK, and NUS Charity as XD did not believe membership was value for money.

Xander McDade believes that his previous experience on the NUS Executive Committee gives him a sound understanding of the organisation, and valid reason for proposing the motion.

Attendance at NUS events and conferences are not included in the membership, so additional costs are incurred for this. Xander McDade did not believe the quality and standard of NUS events within the last 1.5 years are what it used to be. Xander McDade noted that there had been a significant reduction in service. The potential £22+K membership savings could pay for a full time HISA staff member or full time HISA student officer.

Discontinuing the NUS UK and NUS Charity membership would mitigate the risk of HISA having to cuts in other areas of the organisation. This saving would not have much impact on the work that HISA does.

There are a couple of live campaigns which are being led by Student Unions, rather than NUS, such as the Housing Campaign, led by HISA Student Officer, Andy Garrity, and a campaign to stop further funding cuts to HE and FE institutions.

There are many Student Unions which are not affiliated with NUS due to their service performance.

A lot of Student Officer training in Scotland is run by Sparqs, which HISA uses, and is also a member of WonkHE.

The result of the motion will go to HISA Trustee Board for final approval. If there were to be majority against the motion, Trustee Board would need to look at cost cuts elsewhere within HISA.

The referendum would need to be within the next six months to be able to notify NUS if the student body want to come out of membership with them.

A request for a reduction in NUS membership costs had been submitted due to HISA's hardship, but this had not been forthcoming by NUS.

Open Debate

- Student member, Alistair MacLeod, asked whether there would be any downside to leaving NUS. Xander McDade responded that the reliance on using NUS Returning Officer for Student Elections. A mutual agreement had been discussed with a non-affiliated Union, to act as a Returning Officer on behalf of HISA during elections. Officers can attend NUS events, but the value of their events were questionable. And there were additional travel costs to attend the events due to geographical spread of Student Officers.

- Student member, Craig Ward, asked whether there would be alternative Union representation if NUS membership were to cease. Xander McDade responded that there would be collaborative efforts with other affiliated and non-affiliated Student Unions, and that there would not be noticeable difference without NUS membership.
- Student member, Charlotte Usher was concerned that up until recently at UHI Moray, the HISA there were still teaching students what HISA was, and students are being asked to decide on NUS. Charlotte asked whether there could be education to students as to what NUS is, before voting on the membership. Otherwise, students are being asked to vote on something they know nothing about. Xander McDade responded that it would be the responsibility of HISA to explain to students the pros and cons of NUS membership, and who they are.
- Student member, Andi Garrity, reflected on the comment Xander McDade made about HISA paying the most fees. AG asked whether HISA has always been paying the most fees, and the reason for this. Xander McDade responded that NUS affiliation fees are based on Block Grant, and the number of students at an institute. They higher they are the higher the affiliation fee. UHI might look on paper that it is like University of Edinburgh Student Union, but HISA does not have the same commercial income as them. HISA used to pay less due to there being separate college Associations.
- Student member, Millie Foster, asked how long the issue with NUS had been present. Xander McDade responded that the amount HISA pays has been about the same, but there had been dissatisfaction with NUS for a while. Xander McDade's predecessor was unhappy with NUS value for money, and this was a shared view with other HISA Student Officers, and Student Unions.

Argument AGAINST the motion

There were no arguments against the motion.

Amendments

There were no amendments to the motion raised.

Chair invited Student Members to vote on the motion. The results were as follows:

For: 11 (91%)

Against: 0 (0%)

Abstain: 1 (8%)

DECISIONS:

Chair declared that the overall motion had been approved.

Chair gave thanks to all attendees and closed the meeting.